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ABSTRACT

This paper examines past theories and conceptions of epistemology and the work of some key theorists currently working in the field, in the hope of motivating the development of an expanded conception and redescription of epistemology. The paper uses as a metaphor for the study six blind men who describe an elephant as like a rope, a tree, a fan, a snake, a wall, and a spear on the basis of the part of the animal that each man touched. Just as the men had different perspectives on the elephant, different perspectives may lead to an interactive, more comprehensive definition of knowledge. Conventional epistemology, a branch of philosophy that considers theories of knowledge, regards truth as a necessary condition for knowledge and knowers as autonomous, and favors methods for understanding that emphasize reason and the mind. The proposed relational epistemology includes the qualities of knowing that have historically been viewed as detrimental or distracting to obtaining knowledge, qualities such as feelings, emotions, and intuitions. The proposed epistemology views knowledge as something that is socially constructed by embedded, embodied people who are in relation with each other. (MAH)

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ED 401 279

An Examination and Redescription of Epistemology

by

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An Examination and Redescription of Epistemology

I. INTRODUCTION
"The Blind Men and the Elephant"

There were six men from Industan
to learning much inclined
who went to see the elephant
though each of them was blind
so that by observation
each might satisfy his mind.[1]

Many of us are probably familiar with this poem, having read it in school, and laughed at the silly blind men who didn't know they were feeling different parts of an elephant: one felt the tail and thought the elephant is like a rope, another felt a leg and thought the elephant is like a tree, one felt the ear and decided the elephant is like a fan, one felt the trunk and reported the elephant is like a snake, one felt the side of the elephant and suggested the elephant is like a wall, and the last man felt the elephant's tusk and announced the elephant is like a spear.

This poem will be a helpful metaphor in this article. Maybe the six blind men from Industan are not so silly after all; maybe they represent all of us, as we struggle to make sense of the complex world in which we live. I plan to refer to the elephant poem, and see if it can't help us understand the world in a new way and from a different perspective then we've been taught.

Richard Rorty describes philosophers as poets, prophets and soothsayers. Their's is the task of trying to envision the world in new ways, trying to redescribe the familiar, through the use of imagination and metaphors.[2] Philosophers do not have a "God's eye view" or an "inside line to truth." Their skills, the ability to reason and envision, are ones that are available to all, as are their tools, e.g. logic and critical

thinking. With this in mind, I plan to use the metaphor of the six blind men from Industan and their elephant to take another look at knowledge. I will look at the distinctions and categories people have created to describe knowledge and suggest that perhaps these past descriptions are in need of revision. I will suggest that in defining and describing *epistemology*, a study of theories of knowledge, the way many others have described it, leads to a narrow repesentation of the world, and creates serious problems that need to be addressed. Is it possible that in defining knowledge we have excluded qualities that are essential to knowledge? Have we focused on parts of the elephant and lost sight of the larger animal? Is what we are each describing part of something much larger and more comprehensive then any of its parts? I strive to soften distinctions and encourage a more interactive perspective: between categories such as epistemology, metaphysics, and psychology, the knower and the known, and belief and knowledge, for example.

This examination and redescription of epistemology, as a branch of philosophy, is necessary in order for me to be able to offer my own epistemological theory, what I wish to describe as the nurturing of a relational epistemology.[3] This article is meant to motivate the need to develop an expanded conception of epistemology. The further development of a relational epistemology will have to wait for another article, as there is not enough room to do both in the space alloted, and do justice to either. In this article I will look at others' contributions to epistemological theory. In doing so, I hope to bring out some important issues and concerns, as well as others' attempts to address these concerns. I intend to highlight past epistemological theories and then turn my discussion to some key theorists who are currently working in the field of epistemology, hoping that the past theories which have influenced the current theories, will indirectly be included in the conversation. I have chosen these people based on their extensive contributions to the discussion, and my judgment that they represent different perspectives that need to be heard.[4] Part II. highlights key classical

epistemological answers to the question, what is it to "know"? Part III. describes current epistemological theories, and uses these theories as a way to examine the questions and concerns others have raised about a traditional approach to epistemology. Part IV. concludes with the need to redescribe 'epistemology.'

II. THE ELEPHANT POEM IN RELATION TO PAST THEORIES

Please imagine that the elephant poem is a metaphor for theories which explain what it is to know, epistemological theories. There are many examples of important theories from our past, and it is impossible for me to be able to do any of them justice, in the space allowed. But highlighting some, and comparing them to the elephant poem, will hopefully convince us that we need to reexamine our conceptions of epistemology.

Plato[5] described knowledge as something that was Ideal, beyond the grasp of the world which we experience as reality. Even though we may each experience a different kind of elephant, we can all understand what an elephant is, because we each have an idea of Elephantness in its Ideal Form. According to Plato, our souls have all knowledge before they are born and inhabit a physical body. It is the inhabiting of a physical body which causes our souls to forget that knowledge. Learning is remembering what we each already knew.

> "The soul, then, as being immortal and having been born again many times, and having seen all things that exist, whether in this world or in the world below, has knowledge of them all; ...for as all nature is akin, and the soul has learned all things, there is no difficulty in a man eliciting out of a single recollection all the rest ...; for all inquiry and all learning is but recollection" (*PFE*, "Meno," p. 17).

It does not matter to Plato that each of us experiences the world in a different way; because we are souls inhabiting our bodies, we are blind to knowledge (what is true), just like the six blind men. We cannot trust our senses, and be sure we really know what it is we are experiencing. We must tune in to what our souls know. Only by tuning in to the knowledge one's soul already possesses, can a person hope to eventually realize the truth of what he experiences. Others, such as teachers, may act like midwives and help guide the soul on its journey, but ultimately each soul must find the answers by oneself. Finding the answers, realizing the Ideals, is to have knowledge of what is true, according to Plato.

The Myth of the Cave, in Plato's *Republic*[6], is a wonderful story that presents "reality" as something which is socially constructed. The people in the cave experience what they think is "reality," but what they are really experiencing are shadows on the wall, as they sit, chained, and unable to move or turn their heads to see there is a fire behind them, and that those objects they thought were real are just shadows, the real objects being carried by people behind them. Like the blind men from Industan, their senses deceive them, and they cannot trust their experiences.

> "... the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the power of the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world, ... my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the Idea of good appears last of all, and it is seen only with effort; ..." (*PFE*, "Republic," p. 85).

Many students who read Plato's *Republic* and The Myth of the Cave, are struck by the profoundness of his description. He has escaped the problem of our experiences of "reality" being partial and flawed, by saying we should not trust our experiences anyway. What we need to do is trust our souls. Plato points out one of

the key tools available to any person striving to know truth: what he calls "divine contemplation." For divine contemplation is the tuning in to one's soul in search of answers.

> "Whereas our argument shows that the power and capacity of learning exists in the soul already; and that just as if it were not possible to turn the eye from darkness to light without the whole body, so too the instrument of knowledge can only by the movement of the whole soul be turned from the world of becoming to that of being, and learn by degrees to endure the sight of being, and of the brightness and best of being, or in other worlds, of the good" (*PFE*, "Republic," p. 87).

Aristotle[7] argued that knowledge was obtained through tuning in to the soul, to one's ideas, and testing out those ideas through one's experiences. He presented the case that ideas can be deceptive and misleading, just as our experiences can be deceiving. We know that six blind men can feel different parts of an animal, develop ideas of what they are experiencing, and never realize they are each feeling the same animal. If each of these six men never have an idea of elephant, but rather have ideas of ropes, snakes, spears, fans, walls, and tree trunks, their ideas will not help them see the truth about what they are experiencing either. Aristotle hoped that the use of both our ideas and our experiences would lead us to knowledge.

> "(R)easoning on matters of conduct employs premises of two forms ... one universal is predicated of the man himself, the other of the thing ..." (*PFE*, "Nichomachean Ethics," p. 117)

If one's ideas and one's experiences can both be flawed, then, as I understand the situation, Aristotle sent the western world philosophers off on a task that still has not been resolved. Some philosophers have developed epistemological theories that have leaned in Plato's direction, and favored ideas, such as Descartes[8]; some have made suggestions that have leaned toward favoring experiences over ideas, such as Locke.[9] Descartes recommended that the blind men should use a doubting method where everything they can doubt, they should dismiss, until they reach that which they take to be self-evident; what is beyond doubt is what they can be sure is true. This view says that what our minds believe to be self-evident we can trust to be a mirror of the world as it exists. Locke recommended that, since each of us came into this world as a blank slate (tabula rasa) with no knowledge prior to birth, it is our experiences we must rely on, along with our ability to reason.

Others have tried to find a balance between ideas and experience, as Aristotle recommended. Kant suggested that what we can know is not independent reality, "the thing in itself," but always reality as it appears to human beings. Our perceptions of the world are a result of our interaction with the external world and the active powers of our minds.[10] C. S. Peirce suggested that since all of us are flawed individuals who can't trust our ideas or our experiences, what we need to do is work with others, as a community of rational inquirers, to help further our knowledge and understanding.

Like Aristotle, Peirce[11] approached truth from a scientific perspective. Peirce said we seek answers, new solutions, and therefore get closer to truth, as we run into problems with our current beliefs, and start to have doubts about what we thought was "truth." For Peirce, the only method out of a priori speculation (Plato's Ideals) is the "self-corrective" scientific method whose experimental results are always subject to revision by further evidence (The Fixation of Belief, p. 92).

Truth, for Peirce, is absolute, but none of us will ever know absolute truth, because we are all limited beings. This is Peirce's theory of *fallibilism*. Truth is

something we are emerging toward, for with each generation of inquirers we have more understanding. "The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is real. That is the way I would explain reality" ("How to Make Our Ideas Clear," p. 133). Truth is not something one person can find, all on his own, it is found through the collection of all rational inquirer's investigations; and because it takes all of us, the truth in the end will be the same for all of us. "(T)he method (for fixing beliefs) must be such that the ultimate conclusion of every man shall be the same, or would be the same if inquiry were sufficiently persisted in. Such is the method of science." ("The Fixation of Belief," p. 107) As Peirce described truth, it is something the last person on earth will know. "(T)rue opinion must be the one which they would ultimately come to" ("How to Make Our Ideas Clear," p. 133-134).

Kant would advise the six blind men from Industan that they can never know the elephant as the-thing-in-itself, Elephant, but only the elephant as it is represented in relation to their experiences and their minds. Peirce would advise the six blind men to start talking to each other and share the information each of them has. Only by acting as a community of inquirers can they hope to gather a more complete understanding of elephants, one they can all agree upon. But they had better be cautious, and aware that because they are limited human beings, they will likely not understand all there is to know about elephants, either, as the next generation will build on the knowledge they have gained through sharing with each other, and the next generation will reach even a better understanding of elephants then current inquirers can possibly reach.

PART III. THE ELEPHANT POEM IN RELATION TO CURRENT THEORIES

The issues and concerns about epistemology are still debated today as heatedly as they were in early Greece. If we look at the debate in the present, it can be described this way: we begin with the world as a given (there is an elephant), and then say any description of the world, the sense that is made of the world, is something

people create; the meaning people give to the world derive, in part, from the descriptions people develop to explain the world; "reality." So the blind men of Industan offer descriptions of what they experience, each experiencing a different part of an elephant; this feels this way, based on their past experiences, and the meanings that has been attached to those experiences. When one man feels a snake-like shape, the trunk of the elephant, he describes the elephant as a snake, based on the meaning he has attached to an object having that particular shape. Attaching meaning to what each man describes helps each person make sense of the world he is experiencing, the part of the elephant.

Sociologists have labeled this making sense of the world the social construction of "reality."[12] People give meaning to the reality they experience, through language, and then pass that meaning on to their children through conversation and education. Children internalize their parents' socially constructed "reality" through the language they learn, and what they are taught. "The child does not internalize the world of [his/her] significant others as one of many possible worlds. [S/he] internalizes it as *the* world, the only existent and only conceivable world, the world *tout court*" (*SCR*, p. 134). One could imagine that each blind man from Industan had children whom he proceeded to teach that an elephant is a fan, a snake, or a spear, because that is "reality" as he knows it. That "reality" he has pieced together, and then passed on as "reality" to his children. His children do not know this view of elephants is partial or flawed, they take it to be truth, the only way an elephant could possibly exist, for example in the shape of a fan. Elephants as being like fans (or snakes, or walls) is all they conceive of Elephantness.

If descriptions of the world are created by people, then that means they are open to reexamination, criticism, and possible redescribing. For we know from the six blind men poem that people are fallible and flawed in their understandings; their experiences and insights are partial and limited, their views are affected by their

surroundings. This includes myself. Descriptions of the world and theories of why things are so, are explanations that are socially constructed by people who are contextual beings. These people are in relation with other people[13], and they are "embedded and embodied".[14] These people are born into a setting, a certain time and place, surrounded by a certain culture, inhabiting a body that is uniquely their own, relating to at least one other person (even in utero), their mother. All of this social context makes it necessary to assume that people have a past and have been affected by other peoples' views. They are not neutral, impartial, objective beings; their approach to the world is transactive (as Dewey described it[15]), meaning people affect the world, and each other, individually, and collectively, just as the world affects people. My belief is that people are able to become reflective and critical of their context, but how that happens will need to be discussed. Improving people's skills which are necessary for the development of knowledge, such as reasoning and critiquing skills, as well as imaginating and intuiting skills, as well as communicative and relational skills, is what makes it possible for knowledge to continue to grow and develop, as well as be redescribed, and become more beautiful.[16]

Dividing Up the Elephant:

Fields of study such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, and anthropology are examples of descriptive categories people have developed over time as a way of making sense of the world. (I am referring to the descriptive categories that have been developed by the western world, as those are the ones of concern here.) Branches within those fields are further descriptive categories. For philosophy these branches are: metaphysics, aesthetics, ethics, politics, and epistemology, for example. Epistemology, as it has been defined historically by philosophers, looks at questions about the *justification* of people's beliefs, not at how people come to believe certain things (those questions are for sociologists and psychologists). Philosophy is concerned with the normative status of knowledge claims and concerns about what

warrants those claims (what warrants claims is evidence); psychology and sociology are concerned with causal questions concerning how it is beliefs are developed, etc.

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that considers theories of knowledge, and truth as a necessary condition for knowledge. One cannot "know" something that is false, such knowledge would not be classified as knowledge, but rather as a belief. Beliefs are not necessarily true. Mere beliefs, or right opinions, are stated as "S believes that p," "S" being the subject and "p" being the object of the proposition. Rational beliefs are ones that are supported by compelling reasons ("S has good reason to believe that p"). "S knows that p" means S has evidence for the truth of p, S believes that p, and that p is true.[17]

If we compare what I just said to our elephant poem, we recognize that the blind men take their study of elephants (the world) and divide it up into more manageable categories. When they are trying to understand how they come to know about the elephant, they say they are studying psychology. When they are looking at themselves in relation to others studying the elephant, they say they are studying sociology. They say that with either of these kinds of studies, the kinds of claims they will be making are causal ones.

When the blind men are trying to make universal claims of truth about elephants, they are studying philosophy. They say they offer evidence to support those claims. When they are trying to make universal claims about the beauty of elephants, the blind men say they are studying aesthetics. When they are looking at the essence of elephantness, and the necessary and sufficient qualities of elephants, the blind men say they are studying metaphysics. When they are trying to make claims about what they know about elephants, in a universal sense, they are studying epistemology. As the blind men define knowledge, they will only say they know something that is true. In order for something to be true, they say, they must believe

that something is true, have compelling reasons to support their belief about such-and-such being true, and such-and-such must be true.

Let us consider these categories and distinctions, as the blind men have defined them, and see if there are any problems in dividing the world (elephants) up this way. Have we missed anything by focusing on elephants in parts? Once dividing up the elephant into parts in order to better handle the studying of it, have we stopped understanding the whole, or have we ever been able to understand the whole elephant? Are these categories the best way to consider elephants, or should we redesign our categories and redescribe our studies of elephants (the world)? In separating the study of the people who study the elephant from the elephant itself, have we created any problems or concerns? I will begin in the middle, with the field of epistemology, as commonly defined, then move to the distinctive studies within philosophy, then look at the field of philosophy itself, in relation to others, in hopes of teasing out some problems and concerns that dividing up the world this way has maybe caused, or overlooked. As I do so, I plan to add some "blind women's" perspectives into the discussion.[18]

Belief, Knowledge, and Truth:

Given that I am hoping to offer an improved theory of knowledge, a relational epistemology, I begin with *epistemology* and the suggestion that we take a closer look at how the field has been defined. We find, on closer examination, that according to the way the field of epistemology has been defined, the Enlightenment conception of epistemology assumes: "(1) that knowledge properly so-called is autonomous in that it is of no epistemological significance whose it is; (2) that knowledge acquisition may be of psychological interest but it is irrevelant to an epistmologist's quest for criteria of justification, validity, and verification; and (3) that knowledge is objective in the sense that discussion of the character and epistemic circumstances of subjects has nothing to contribute to the proper epistemological task of assessing the product."[19] In other

words, the blind men are trying to gather knowledge of elephants. Who these blind people are or how they derive this knowledge is not of concern; from an epistemological perspective, what's of concern is the knowledge they derive. That derived knowledge is separate from the blind men who have derived it, and if what they derive is in fact knowledge, it should be true for any of us, no matter who we are, what our perspective is, or what our situation is. From the field of epistemology's perspective, as commonly defined, what the blind men need to be concerned with is what evidence they will have to find knowledge.

Remember, we said the blind men would only define as knowledge something that is true. And in order for something to be knowledge, the blind men (S) must believe that such-and such (p) is true, have compelling reasons to support their belief that p is true, and p is true. The first requirement, the blind men must believe that p is true, doesn't help find knowledge very much, for we know it's possible for the blind men to believe that an elephant is a fan or a spear or a rope! (Just as we know it is possible for people to believe the world is flat.)

How about the second requirement? The blind men need "compelling reasons" to support their belief, but what counts as "compelling reasons"? This has been a heatedly discussed topic, since the beginning of philosophy. Remember, Plato said we can't trust our experiences to give us good reasons, and Aristotle said we can't trust our ideas alone, either. The kinds of criteria philosophers have used to help judge reasons include clarity, consistency, coherency, cohensiveness, comprehensiveness; are the reasons clearly stated, do they follow logically and not contradict each other, do they make sense, do they answer all the questions we can ask, do the reasons fit together with other beliefs we consider knowledge? Isn't it possible to imagine our blind men are very clever and they can give reasons to support their beliefs about elephants that are clear, consistent, coherent, cohensive, and comprehensive, and yet not be true? (We certainly had good reasons to believe

the world was flat.) And isn't it possible to imagine each of our six blind men would have different interpretations of what they take to be clear, or consistent, or coherent, etc.? In other words, aren't the criteria themselves subject to different interpretations?

This leads us to the final criteria for knowledge, that p is true. According to Enlightenment epistemological theory, the ultimate object of knowledge is reality itself. Even though one blind man may believe that the elephant is a fan, and he has compelling reasons to justify his belief, that still does not make the elephant a fan, unless it is true that it really is. But how is the blind man ever going to know whether what he believes is true or not? We seem to have ended up in a circular theory. Does this mean that there is nothing we can say for sure we know? Or is knowledge ultimately based on faith? Somehow such a theory of knowledge does not appear so helpful after all. What's the point of having a theory of knowledge about the world, when there is nothing we can say fits safely into that theory, for there is nothing that we can be sure to say we know?

Maybe we can find some help in understanding the value of *epistemology* as a category by turning to a current epistemologist. I will describe Harvey Siegel's position because it is clearly an absolutist one, and contrast it with a qualified relativist position many "blind women", feminist philosophers such as Flax, Code, Jaggar and myself, embrace.[20]

Absolutism vs Qualified Relativism:

Siegel has been complemented by philosophers, such as Burbules[21], for moving epistemology away from vulgar absolutism to an absolutism that is less dogmatic, one that opens the door to fallibilism and pluralism. Siegel says that "(c)ontemporary epistemologists - absolutists and relativists alike - reject certainty, dogmatism, and all the other features of vulgar absolutism" (*RR*, p. 164). The sort of absolutism he recommends is a "non-dogmatic, non-certain, corrigible, fallible, non-unique absolutism" (*RR*, p. 164).

Translated to our elephant metaphor, Siegel is saying that all of us who are currently working in the field of epistemology realize that we cannot be certain we understand all there is to know about Elephants (the world, as reality, as truth). We all understand that people are limited and make mistakes, and that people have many different views and perspectives on elephants.

Although such a description of absolute may not sound very absolute, for Siegel, "*absolutism is a necessary precondition of epistemological inquiry*" (my italics,*RR*, p. 165). What's absolute about a "non-dogmatic, non-certain, corrigible, fallible, non-unique absolutism" is "the possibility of objective, non-question begging evaluation of putative knowledge claims, in terms of criteria which admit of criticism and improvement" (*RR*, p. 162).

In other words, Siegel believes there must be some way to evaluate our different theories on elephants, and judge that some are better then others; at the same time he acknowledges that what we use as criteria for judging people's theories on elephants could also be flawed, and must be open to criticism as well.

For Siegel: a "relativist must regard epistemological debate as pointless, insofar as there is, for the relativist, no possibility of genuinely answering central epistemological questions" (*RR*, p. 165). The relativist "gives up the absolutist conception of rightness" and therefore "cannot assert that foundationalism (non-foundationalism), correspondence (coherence) theories of truth or justification, causal (reliabilist, defeasibility, etc.) theories of knowledge, or the like are non-relatively right. *But genuine epistemological debate does have as its aim the determination of the non-relatively right answers to these questions*" (my italics, *RR*, p. 166).

While Siegel goes to great length in *Relativism Refuted* to distinguish *absolutism* from "vulgar absolutism," he is not so gracious with *relativism.* According to Siegel, only a "vulgar absolutist" believes that it doesn't matter what one's perspective is, in relation to the elephant, one can still know the elephant in its entirety (truth).

Vulgar absolutist epistemological orientations have been labeled by feminists, such as Lorraine Code, with the help of Donna Haraway's astute observation, as "the view from nowhere." But is it the case there is only one view of relativism, or is it possible that there is a "vulgar relativist" view as well as a "qualified relativist" view? "Vulgar relativism," the belief that it also doesn't matter what one's perspective is, in relation to the elephant, for all perspectives are right (true), has been labeled by Code and Haraway as "the view from everywhere." "Relativism is a way of being nowhere and claiming to be everywhere" but "absolutism is a way of being everywhere while pretending to be nowhere."[22]

We saw from the discussion above concerning the way epistemology has been defined, and the guidelines that have been given for helping to find knowledge, that indeed the guidelines seem rather circular, and potentially pointless. They don't seem to help us find knowledge (what is true). At most, we can hope that Peirce is right, and we are getting closer to truth. Believing that we cannot find the truth about Elephants does not mean we have to embrace all theories about elephants as being true. What it does mean is that we must acknowledge that we don't know the Truth about Elephants. We still try to describe elephants, and seeks to find out more information and learn more about elephants. We continue to inquire. And we try to support our understandings about elephants with as much "evidence" as we can socially construct, qualified by the best criteria upon which we can agree. A qualified relativist, such as Jaggar, Flax, Code, or myself, grounds her claims "in experiences and practices, in the efficacy of dialogical negotiation and of action."[23]

While Siegel agrees with the need to reject a formal conception of rationality, and to "regard rationality as a substantive epistemic notion, involving the contents of sentences rationally related" (*PES*, p. 228) , he says that if rationality is determined by "the actual activities, decisions, and judgments which people make, then I see a big problem: namely, there is no room on this view for actual activities, decisions, and

judgments to be irrational, for there is no role for criteria to function in assessing specific activities, decisions, and judgments as rational (or not)" (*PES*, p. 229). Siegel wishes to argue that "rationality" (as a concept) is dependent on the idea of "absolutism," and "absolutism" is dependent on a criteria of "rightness" (truth) which must be objective and nonrelative, not something socially contructed. Yet, he has agreed that the criteria used to judge rival claims must be subject to critical assessment and improvement. Siegel says he is not saying philosophers have a "God's eye view of truth" or claiming that he has found an Archimedian point. If the presently accepted criteria (the absolutist's belief system) can be critically assessed, Siegel suggests the criteria can be self-correcting and corrigible.

> "Principles embody rationality and define and assess reasons in a tradition at a time. As the tradition evolves, so do the principles which define and assess reasons. So what may count as good reason in a tradition may change over time; today's compelling reason may be seen as less compelling tomorrow ... Still, the principles which determine the compellingness of reasons at a time apply to all putative reasons impartially and universally.... (T)he principles which define reasons and determine their force may change, but rationality remains the same" (*ER*, p. 134-35, from *RR/ER* , p. 251).

But, if one embraces fallibilism and pluralism, one has to admit that the criteria as presently accepted could be wrong, *right now.* A qualified relativist position such as the one I am proposing, says that, given the presently accepted criteria, this is the best judgment I can make, but I am aware that my criteria may be limited, and I could be wrong. Although this statement seems to be exactly what Siegel is saying with his definition of "absolute," as cited above, it really is not, as Siegel believes he can say

even more. Here is where I think epistemologists who embrace an Enlightenment conception of *epistemology*, as defined above, overestimate their abilities. I believe fallibilism and pluralism are theories that admit to the social construction of reality. Siegel does not agree with me. While he admits that what he believes, right now, might be wrong, the possibility is there, that does not itself show that he IS wrong, right now. If it did, then everything would in fact be wrong, since everything could possibly be wrong. If not wrong, Siegel says, then what he believes is right: ABSOLUTELY right (right/wrong being understood as contradictories). And his reasons can also be absolute, as he has defined "absolute."[24]

I think Siegel's point is, "As long as I believe p is true, and I have compelling reasons to believe p is true, I can claim to be right, because p is true, even though my claiming to be right is always subject to fallibilism. My being right, absolutely, is independent of my showing that I am." This is because there is a p that is true, independent of me and whether I can show that I am right or not. There is an elephant, who is an elephant, absolutely, independent of what any of us think about elephants, and how any of us have defined elephants. Siegel is saying: "I am right, absolutely, if what I believe is right." What I am saying is, "I believe I am right, qualified by a socially constructed view of knowledge, so I know I could be wrong."

Enlightenment philosophers have defined epistemology in such a way that *the concept of absolutism is built right into the definition of what epistemology is*. Siegel, who embraces this definition, helps us understand a central concern all epistemologists must address. The Enlightenment conception of epistemology implies that people must have something absolute that they can appeal to, theory, or they can not claim to know what is right. Unfortunately, or fortunately (depending on one's view) in the end - the criteria used to support theories are fallible themselves and that must be admitted. I can not offer truth claims that are absolute any more then Siegel or anyone else can. I can offer new theory to try to explain how it is we know, and argue

and debate with people as to why I think my description of reality is more inclusive or beneficial than others presented previously. That is all any of us can do.

Historically, epistemologists have assumed the value of absolutism in the very way they have defined the field of epistemology. Absolutist epistemologists have argued for the value of absolutism because it offers people the opportunity to judge what's right; qualified relativists, such as myself, push for the inclusion of context because it forces people to open the door towards acknowledging they could be wrong, that "right" is judged from a social perspective. We are all, as epistemologists, hoping to warrant our theories in reality, and to arrive at knowledge, but qualified relativists are acknowledging how extremely difficult that is to do, given that each of us is so embedded within our own socially constructed "realities."

Philosophers who embrace the Enlightenment conception of epistemology not only overestimate their abilities; they also tend to act as gatekeepers to the field of epistemology. Absolutist epistemologists do not consider qualified relativists, such as myself, to even be epistemologists due to the fact that qualified relativists have not embraced the field of epistemology as absolutist epistemologists have defined it, with an assumption of absolutism. Where some feminists, such as Code, conclude there can be no feminist epistemology given the Enlightenment conception of epistemology, I choose to try to broaden the definition of *epistemology*.

I would also like to present the case that the way the branch of philosophy, *epistemology*, has been defined, in terms of distinguishing it from other branches, limits the possible questions and concerns an epistemologist can address to a dangerously thin level. Let me elaborate further.

Ontology and Epistemology:

Philosophers have distinguished ontology as a branch of philosophy, separate from epistemology, since the days of the early Greek philosophers. By making such a distinction, philosophers have assumed that being can be separated from knowing, for

ontology is the study of being (what is, the essence of things) and epistemology is the study of knowing (what is truth). These categorical distinctions separate knowers from knowledge/ideas. The distinctions treat knowledge as if it has a life of its own. This seems to me to be another central problem for philosophers. As Jane Flax observes: "(i)n philosophy, being (ontology) has been divorced from knowing (epistemology) and both have been separated from either ethics or politics."[25]

As we discovered above, philosophers have created categories, distinquished fields of study, and branches within those fields, which are based on certain values, and therefore biases. We learned in the discussion on belief, knowledge, and truth, that those categories are based on an assumption of absolutism. Separating knowledge from being assumes philosophers are able to be neutral, objective seekers of truth. It assumes that it doesn't matter which blind man is studying elephants, from which perspective, or that the blind man is from Industan. The character and circumstances of the knowers is not important, it is the assessing of the product, knowledge, that is important. And yet, we know from the work of feminist scholars as well as scholars in the area of cultural diversity that people's values and biases can be found in how they have defined what questions are worth considering, what methods for addressing those questions are considered valid, and what ideas and solutions are sound.[26] Like Flax, (Code and Jaggar agree): "I assume here that knowledge is the product of human beings. Thinking is a form of human activity which cannot be treated in isolation from other forms of human activity including the forms of human activity which in turn shape the humans who think. Consequently, philosophies will inevitably bear the imprint of the social relations out of which they and their creators arose."[27]

Gregory Bateson, as a naturalist, effectively described the problem this way:

> "In the natural history of living human being, ontology and epistemology cannot be separated. [One's] (commonly unconscious) beliefs about

> what sort of world it is will determine how [one] sees it and acts within it, and [one's] ways of perceiving and acting will determine [one's] beliefs about its nature. The living [human] is thus bound within a net of epistemological and ontological premises which - regardless of ultimate truth or falsity-become partially self-validating for [him/her]."[28]

Let me give an example of this "net of epistemological and ontological premises," and how the premises become self-validating, that can be related to the elephant poem. Historically, many epistemogical theories have described knowers as autonomous, rather than describing individual knowers as being developed out of a community of other knowers, certainly affected by their environment and the people that surround them. Peirce is an example of an exception to this autonomous approach to knowers, as he recognized the influence we have on each other's opinions. But even Peirce argued that we each have "a critical self," within us, which helps us persuade others, and makes it possible for us to distinguish between absolute truth and what we do not doubt.[29] That "critical self" within us is what separates us from others, and helps us be able to think on our own. Peirce also favored a "scientific method" for approaching knowledge, one based on reason and logic, rather than one that might acknowledge the value of imagination and intuition, for example.

If one assumes a person can discover truth by himself, then one will approach the study of elephants on an individual basis. Each of the six blind men from Industan will not worry about trying to discuss their individual theories with the others who are also examining the elephant, in hopes of gaining a better understanding. Instead, each blind man may even avoid contact with the others for fear they might bias his own inquiry, or distract him. A person who believes knowers are autonomous will trust that he can critique, from his own individual perspective, and find fault with what others

have proposed. Yet we can understand, with our example of the blind men, how faulty one individual man's perspective can be. On his own, a person can decide that the elephant is like a snake or a spear! If a man believes that knowers are autonomous he is capable of believing he is right without necessarily testing his theory against others. Even when he goes to test his theory against others, if he believes he has the ability to critique others' theories against his own, he will confidently dismiss others' theories (that the elephant is like a wall or a rope) as faulty.

If the blind men favor the "scientific method" as Peirce, and many other philosphers have throughout time, then each will try to collect data, likely based on their senses, and their ability to reason. Yet we can predict that with such an approach to knowledge the men may never arrive at an understanding of the whole elephant, as it exists. They will need to be able to imagine a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. They will need to be creative, and use their intuitive skills, and they will find that if they rely on their feelings and emotions as well as their mind, they will be more successful with their efforts to be creative and intuitive.

I want to question the assumption that knowers are autonomous, given the view that our "reality" is something that is socially constructed. I also want to consider whether or not it is even valuable to view each of us as autonomous knowers. Accepting Peirce's view that we are all fallible beings and that truth is something we continue to get closer to as we work together and share our perspectives with each other, why would we want to embrace a view of epistemology that encourages us to look at people as separate knowers? Why not embrace a description of epistemology which encourages us to see how interrelated and interconnected the world is, including the people within it? If Peirce is right then our only hope of understanding the world, even partially, comes from our willingness to work together, and welcome each other's contributions in an effort to understand them, before we critique them and dismiss them.

I also want to question the assumption that the best approach to knowledge is through the use of one's reasoning ability, at the exclusion of other potential tools. It is not that I want to dismiss reasoning as a valuable tool, for certainly it is one I am relying on considerably in the writing of this article. But I am also using a metaphor of six blind men from Industan and their study of the elephant to help us gain a better understanding of what knowledge is. The metaphor helps us imagine and intuitively make connections, and understand how ideas are related. The metaphor hopefully improves understanding, if it is being successful. I did not think of this metaphor by methodically reviewing research articles and epistemological theories. It came to me as a flash of insight, after struggling to find a helpful image. It did not come to me when I was using my logical reasoning skills, but rather when I was not "working" at all, but instead was getting ready for bed. I suspect most of us make connections, and understand the world in new ways, often "by accident" when we are NOT trying to figure things out. Acknowledging and valuing our "other" tools available to us, to help us potentially know the world we live in, is something I hope to accomplish with a relational epistemological approach.

Philosophy and Psychology:

We have discovered that the categories and distinctions concerning epistemology as a branch of philosophy are based on assumptions of absolutism, and autonomy, and favor methods for understanding that emphasize reason and the mind. What about the distinction that has been made between psychology and philosophy? Philosophers have described the epistemological task of assessing the quality of reasons as being quite separate from any discussion of the character and epistemic circumstances of subjects. Historically, epistemological theorists have argued that criteria for warranting knowledge claims can be found without having to consider the way human beings know. This view of knowledge treats it as a product quite separate from human beings, some "thing" which is "out there" or "in here." So, depending on

one's perspective, any of the six blind men should be able to discover the truth about elephants, either by using their experiences and exploring elephants "out there," or by tuning in to their soul's awareness of elephants "inside" themselves.

If one views knowledge as something people contribute to, as something that people weave together, then the distinctions between knowers and knowledge are no longer so clear. In fact, they become very intertwined and obviously interrelated. When one begins to understand the interactive connection between social beings and ideas, one realizes it is necessary to look at the kinds of relationships people experience and which ones enhance the development of ideas and the weaving of knowledge. Ethical and political issues will need to be addressed in an epistemological theory that looks at knowledge as created by *people*, not just knowledge *per se*, for the quality of the social relationships people have will affect the ideas being constructed/created, especially in terms of whether or not the ideas have the opportunity to even be expressed.

With such a view of knowledge, we realize that it becomes important to ask questions like, why are these six people who are studying the elephant only men? Why are they all blind and what affect does their blindness have on their theories about elephants? Where did these men come from, what is the context of their social situations? How is it they have no prior experience of elephants, and yet they are adults, and they live in a land where elephants are central to their social system?

I wish to argue that any attempt to look at knowledge claims, separate from any examination of how those claims were derived, is to make a serious mistake. "(A) theory of knowledge that lacks a reasonable understanding of how human beings can and do acquire and add to knowledge must be of dubious relevance. Sound psychological insights form an invaluable, sine qua non basis for any theory of knowledge that purports to explicate the way human beings know."[30] The historical distinctions epistemologists have made effectively remove epistemology as a field of

study from the practical-political issues a feminist epistemology must address. As I am redescribing epistemology, any theory of knowledge is clearly affected by knowers and their circumstances. Like Lorraine Code, I will be arguing that "theories that transcend the specificities of gendered and otherwise situated subjectivites are impotent to come to terms with the politics of knowledge."[31]

The writing of a relational epistemology is motivated by the desire to expand what epistemology means to include the qualities of knowing that have historically been viewed as detrimental or distracting to the obtaining of knowledge, qualities such as feelings, emotions, and intuitions which are usually linked to women, rather than men. I choose to attempt to redescribe knowledge, and the only tools I have available to me are the same ones that are available to anyone else, e.g. my ability to reason and think critically, my intuition, my relational skills and communication skills, my emotions and feelings, and the fact that these are questions I care enough about to pursue. As with any other philosopher, all I can ever hope to do is "attempt to describe how understanding is possible in particular contexts; [philosophy] cannot create a universalizing theory of knowledge that can ground and account for all knowledge or test all truth claims because these are necessarily context dependent."[32]

Am I not trying to offer a universalizing theory of knowledge myself? I argue for the need to redescribe knowledge, and present the case that what I am doing I consider to be epistemology. I cite evidence to support my claims that the field of epistemology has been too narrowly defined, and has been based on assumptions such as absolutism, autonomy, and knowledge being a product separate from human beings as knowers. I do think it is possible to justify claims concerning reality. But I am also aware that it is hard to know if what one considers "evidence" is real, not socially constructed.

The relational epistemological theory I plan to describe is one I will offer up for discussion. I do not claim to have the best theory, the truest theory, for I know many

other theories will follow mine, and others currently are being developed, which are based on understanding I do not have. Although it is not the truest, the best, the most complete, or final explanation of knowledge, I do think it has important advantages to offer over other epistemological theories. One of the advantages is that it is a more encompassing description of knowledge, because a relational epistemology includes vital aspects of knowledge that other theories tend to overlook or exclude from the discussion. My attention to, and valuing of such qualities as relationality and caring in an intersubjective world should make a relational epistemological theory one that is more inclusive and less open to ideological abuse. Women and men should find this theory applies to them, including people from different ethnic backgrounds and ways of life. This must be the case, if I am right at all in my claim that the theory I am developing is an improved description of how people know. I also hope that a relational epistemology opens the possibilities for valuing contributions from all people. We need each other to nurture the constructing/weaving of knowledge and help make it sound, comprehensive, coherent, cohensiveness, as well as beneficial and beautiful. Whether this theory meets these criteria or not (or other criteria demeaned valuable and important) must be tested by all of us as contributors to knowledge.

IV. A REDESCRIPTION OF EPISTEMOLOGY

In the process of gaining a voice, growing and developing as human beings, people learn from others. Through others we learn language and our culture, how to communicate with each other, and ways of relating with each other. Because of this necessary social beginning that all human beings have, which helps form who we are, we can never claim to know soley based on our own individual perspective. Who we are as individuals, and how we think depends greatly on the social relationships we have with others, and the time, place and culture, the social setting we are born into. Qualities such as our language and our gendered customs, all affect the constructing

of knowledge. *A relational epistemology views knowledge as something that is socially constructed by embedded, embodied people who are in relation with each other.*

Given that we are social beings contingently placed in this world, affecting each other from the beginning, it is easy to understand that we need each other in order to be better thinkers. The idea that one person, all by himself, could claim to find Truths, Facts, or know the Answers, begins to sound absurd. Nobody enters this world without a history, already begun before the birth of that child. Nobody is able to develop thoughts, or a language to express one's thoughts, without having contact with others. And nobody can come into contact with others without being affected by them. How can we think we find solutions all by ourselves? Such an idea begins to sound very arrogant, to say the least. Solutions to problems, or truths are something that emerge and evolve, just as we do, for we participate in their development. No one of us can ever hope to find Truth, because of the sure fallibility of individual human knowledge, due to it's contingency, but all of us together, as communities of knowers, can work together, share with each other what each of us understands individually, and collectively help to create theories of knowledge, for the next generation of knowers to contribute to. With such a model, knowledge takes on a very fluid image, always being redescribed as it changes and develops; the quality of the theories are dependent on the ability of people to relate to each other and share their insights.

With a relational epistemological theory, it will be important to discuss how a sense of self is evolved, and the importance of that development to the constructing of knowledge. I assume knowledge is constructed by human beings who are in relation with each other. These human beings were once very young children, and when they were born they were not born with a sense of self. Historically, epistemologists have tended to treat people, when they come into the discussion, as if they were adults who never went through the process of being formed through relations with others. I

assume that people begin their lives in a relationship (even in utero), they are already interacting with someone else, affecting that other person (mother) as well as being affected by that other person, before they are physically born.[33] People are not isolated beings who are born fully developed. I assume people develop a sense of self through their relationships with others, which are internalized and interact with people's own innate constitutions. I take early infantile experiences and childrearing to be vital to the constructing of knowledge.[34] I assume relationships, first with one's mother, then with others, develop prior to as well as simultaneous with the development of language, thoughts, and ideas. We will discover that it is because we are social beings in caring relations with each other that we develop a sense of self, our own voice. Without the opportunity to develop a healthy sense of self, one cannot become a knower/thinker able to contribute to the construction of knowledge.[35]

By this account, we develop our thinking skills as we develop our communication skills and our social skills, by being in relationships with others. We test out our ideas with other people and come across problems we must solve due to other people. What we come to believe is an answer or a solution, what is our most trustworthy knowledge, is derived through the use of conversation with others. What implications this relational theory of knowledge has for education (in particular, formal schooling) must also be addressed. There is much more that can be said, but at least this is a start. My hope is to open this topic up for further discussion. It is through interaction with others that we all learn, including myself.

ENDNOTES

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and suggestions were insightful and encouraging. There is some overlap in this article with a paper I gave at the 1995 Philosophy of Education Society conference, titled: "Navigating Epistemological Territories." I am grateful to my institution for the basic grant I was awarded which afforded me the opportunity to work on the research for this topic.

1. "The Blind Men and the Elephant" is an old tale from India. A children's book version is retold by Lillian Quigley, *The Blind Men and the Elephant* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959).

2. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, irony, and solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

3. I cannot identify the exact source for this term, it occurred to me as I was reading a long list of feminist writers. But three philosophers who helped me see the need for a relational epistemology were: Jean Grimshaw, *Philosophy and Feminist Thinking* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984); and Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989). This relational epistemology could also be labeled a social feminist epistemology.

4. I do not wish to imply, by my choice of authors, that there are not many important contributions being made by others, all of which I have had to only reference, or leave out of this discussion. Please see, for example, the work of Robert Ennis, Richard Paul, and John McPeck, as well as Judith Butler, Nancy Fraser, Linda Nicholson, Nancy Harstock, and Iris Young.

5. Plato, "The Meno", in Steven M. Cahn, *The Philosophical Foundations of Education* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970): 17. I will use *PFE* to symbolize this publication.

6. Plato, "The Myth of the Cave" (also known as The Allegory of the Cave) is in Book VII of *The Republic,* in *PFE*, pp 83-89.

7. Aristotle, "Nichomachaen Ethics," in *PFE*, pp107-120.

8. Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Lawrence J. Lafleur. (1641).

9. John Locke's classic writing is *Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (1690).

10. Kant's classic writing is *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).

11. Charles Sanders Peirce, *Values in a Universe of Chance: Selected Writings of Charles Sanders Peirce* (1839-1914), edited by Philip P. Wiener, (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday & Co, Inc., 1958). All selections cited from Peirce are from this source.

12. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966). I will use *SCR* to symbolize this publication. Berger and Luckmann begin their treatise by noting they are not claiming to answer the philosophical question - how is one to know? The sociologist is forced to use quotation marks around "reality" and "knowledge." Sociologists can't differentiate between valid and invalid assertions about the world - as a philosopher "is driven to decide" (*SCR*, p. 2).

13. My original sources for this idea are: George Herbert Mead. *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* edited by Charles W. Morris. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934) and John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (NY: The Macmillan Co., 1916, renewed in 1944). For others who are working on "social epistemology" see: Steve Fuller, Alvin Goldman, and John Hardwig. I am indebted to Steve Norris and Harvey Siegel for these references.

14. This is Seyla Benhabib's phrase, used in *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

15. Dewey discusses his transactive theory as the "principle of interaction" in *Experience and Education* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938, renewed in 1965).

16. I am suggesting that other then the typical criteria used by philosophers to justify theories as being based on compelling reasons, criteria such as clarity, coherence, and consistency, there are other criteria that should be considered as well, such as beauty, elegance, harmony, inclusiveness, and beneficiality. I will say more on this later.

17. Harvey Siegel points out that this way of discussing knowledge is found in any introduction to epistemology text. My source for this description was John Hardwig, "Epistemic Dependence, " *The Journal of Philosophy*, 82, no.7 (1985): 335-349, 336, and Siegel's direct correspondence to me. Burbules labels this description of epistemology "the Enlightenment conception" in Nicholas C. Burbules, "Two Perspectives on Reason as an Educational Aim: The Virtues of Reasonableness" *Philosophy of Education 1991*, Proceedings of the 47th Annual Meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society, eds. Margret Buchmann, Robert E. Floden (Normal, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1992).

18. Lorraine Code, *Epistemic Responsibility* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, for Brown University Press, 1987).

Lorraine Code, "Taking Subjectivity into Account," in *Feminist Epistemologies*, eds. Linda Alcoff, Elizabeth Potter (NY and London: Routledge, 1993).

Lorraine Code, *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991).

Jane Flax, "Political Philosophy and the Patriarchal Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Epistemology and Metaphysics," in *Discovering Reality,* eds. Sandra Harding, Merrill B. Hintikka (Dordrecht, Boston, London: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1983).

Jane Flax, *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in Contemporary West* (Berkeley, LA, Oxford: University of California Press, 1990).

Alison M. Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology," *Women, Knowledge, and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy*, eds. Ann Garry, Marilyn Pearsall (New York, London: Routledge, 1989, 1992).

Alison M. Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, Rowman & Alianheid, Publ., 1983).

19. Code, *Epistemic Responsibility*, 25-26.

20. Harvey Siegel, *Relativism Refuted: A Critique of Contemporary Epistemological Relativism* (Dordrecht & Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1987). I will use *RR* to symbolize this publication.

Harvey Siegel, "Two Perspectives on Reason as an Educational Aim: The Rationality of Reasonableness," *Philosophy of Education 1991*, Proceedings of the 47th Annual Meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society, eds. Margret Buchmann, Robert E. Floden (Normal, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 1992). I will use *PES* to symbolize this publication.

21. Burbules, "Two Perspectives on Reason as an Educational Aim: The Virtues of Reasonableness."

Nicholas C. Burbules, "Rationality and Reasonableness: A Discussion of Harvey Siegel's *Relativism Refuted* and *Educating Reason*," *Educational Theory*,41, no. 2 (Spring, 1991):235-252.

22. Code, "Taking Subjectivity into Account," 40.

23. Ibid., 39.

24. Siegel, through personal correspondence, August, 1994, and again May 2, 1995.

25. Jane Flax discusses the psychological/philosophical distinction in "Political Philosophy and the Patriarchal Unconscious" and *Thinking Fragments* . She sites D.

W. Hamlyn, *Experience and the Growth of Understanding* (London, Boston, and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978) as a favorable source of the distinctions between the two fields. Flax offers Kant as an example in her footnote 8 in "Political Philosophy and the Patriarchal Unconscious."

26. See related quote by Jaggar in, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology," 155-156.

27. Flax, "Political Philosophy and the Patriarchal Unconscious," 248.

28. Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972), 314.

29. Peirce, "What Pragmticism Is," p. 191.

30. Code, *Epistemic Responsibility* , 32.

31. Code, *What Can She Know?*, 315.

32. Flax, *Thinking Fragments*, 38. The bracketed word is mine.

33. Barbara Thayer-Bacon, "Selves in Relation: Reconstructing Community" delivered at the American Educational Research Conference, 1993.

34. I am not alone in drawing attention to the infant in discussions on epistemology. See: Seyla Benhabib, Jane Flax, Nel Noddings, and Sara Ruddick.

35. See: Barbara Thayer-Bacon, "How the Child Reasons," *Ohio Valley Philosophy of Education Society*, 1989; and "Egocentrism in Critical Thinking Theory," *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines*, May 1991.